

## WorkFirst Partnership and Customer Service

January 2005

### What is the WorkFirst partnership?

Washington initiated the WorkFirst program in August 1997 to help low-income parents become self-sufficient. WorkFirst is an integrated service delivery system; four agencies use their expertise to help WorkFirst families move from welfare to work, and ultimately financial independence. WorkFirst also uses local planning partnerships that include various local groups that provide a network of services and supports.

The **Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)** is the entry point and ongoing contact point for families in the WorkFirst program. After eligibility for public assistance is established, parents attend an orientation to the program and are assigned to a program specialist who provides employment-focused case management. The specialist helps the WorkFirst parent progress toward the goal of getting a job, makes referrals to job search and training programs, and helps manage barriers to employment. DSHS also arranges for support services such as transportation, food, clothing and child care subsidies, and assists with child support collection and paternity establishment.

The **Employment Security Department (ESD)** makes the employment connection through job search, job retention and wage progression services. Job service specialists provide intensive services to prepare parents to market themselves to employers, find jobs and to move up the wage ladder. Parents are directed to jobs that match their skills and interests and offer the best wages and opportunities for advancement.

The **State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)** assures job skills training, basic skills, high-school equivalency diploma (GED) preparation, and English as a Second Language programs are available at community and technical colleges across the state. Through local partnerships, colleges have implemented a new generation of job focused training to meet the needs of the local economy and WorkFirst families.

The **Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED)** administers the Community Jobs program, which contracts with local service providers to deliver services for WorkFirst parents with multiple barriers to employment. Community Jobs combines a part-time subsidized job with training, providing an opportunity to gain work experience and skills, increase income, and gain self-confidence. CTED also works with local business communities and administers Local Area Planning.

### WASHINGTON **WorkFirst**

- The number of families on welfare in Washington dropped 41 percent since WorkFirst began, from nearly 96,000 in 1997 to approximately 57,000 in December 2004.
- More than 146,000 parents have left welfare and stayed off.
- The proportion of people on welfare in Washington is at its lowest point in more than 30 years.

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For more information about the WorkFirst program, visit

[www.workfirst.wa.gov](http://www.workfirst.wa.gov)

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A Better Job,  
A Better Life**



